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ABSTRACT

This technical bulletin poses questions of concern to law-related educators (LRE) and citizenship educators working to reduce violence among students and the larger community. Maintaining that the sociological implications of violence on television and in video games should be a serious concern to all educators, the bulletin describes the importance of the television media, examines the effects of violent television programs and video games, and discusses possible implications for LRE educators. The bulletin suggests the following instructional approaches in discussing with students the prevalence of media violence and how to practice critical thinking in evaluating television programs and video games: (1) First Amendment freedom of speech; (2) using the V-chip; (3) critical analysis; (4) redesigning programs to present fewer sounds and scenes of violence; (5) awareness of market share; and (6) activities involving the family and community. Contains 22 references and a 14-item annotated resource list for teachers and parents. (BT)

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by Mary A. Hepburn

American Bar Association
Division for Public Education

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Bulletin

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Vicarious Violence on the Screen: A Challenge to Educators and Families

By Mary A. Hepburn

Why in recent years and months has there been so much violent behavior by students in the schools? What motivated the horrible killings and injuries in schools in Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Los Angeles, and Michigan? Where do these young people, from first graders to high school students, get their murderous ideas? Could the incessant violence in television, movies, and video games contribute to these behaviors? Does the daily diet of attacks, shootings, and bashings in TV dramas and serials, movies, cartoons, and warrior games contribute to a growing perspective among young people that violent behavior is an acceptable way of life? These are questions of serious concern to law-related educators working to reduce violence among students and the larger community.

We are not lacking evidence of either the pervasiveness or the influence of the images of violence purveyed by the visual electronic media. In the past 20 years there have been numerous studies of and frequent warnings about the role of violence in television programs and movies in arousing some young people to act violently. There are social factors involved: brutality in home life, exposure to violence in neighborhoods, the lack of interaction with parents, and the easy access to guns. But, in addition, the viewing of hours and hours of entertainment containing excessive violence has been cited by researchers as a significant contributor to violent behavior by youngsters. Let's look at the evidence and consider what educators can do about it.

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Editor's Note: Originally published in 1996 as "Vicarious Violence on TV," Technical Assistance Bulletin #16 has been updated by author Mary Hepburn to address additional electronic media and related resources.

Long Reach of TV Shows, Movies, and Video Games into American Households

Nearly 100 percent of households have television, and the number of sets is increasing: 87 percent of households have two or more sets. Slightly over 60 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds have a television set in their bedroom. Cable TV is found in about 77 percent of American homes, and it is greatly increasing the number of networks and programs that can be accessed (Stanger and Gridina, 1999). Children readily learn the TV-viewing lifestyle from the adults around them. The most voracious consumers are women and men over 55, respectively viewing approximately 41 hours and 35 hours weekly. Men and women aged 25–54 view an average of roughly 25 hours of TV per week. Children ages 2–11 view about 22 hours of TV a week, and teenagers (12–17) watch about 20 hours per week (Nielsen, 1998).

Within these averages, there are ethnic, family, and economic differences. For example, in African-American households, children 2–11 and 12–17 watched two more hours of TV per week during the evening prime-time hours than children of the same age in all other households. From a different perspective, the people who watch more TV than any other category of viewer are those in households subscribing to premium pay cable services. Larger families view more TV. Families with four or more children watch an average of 59 hours a week compared to 37 hours in families with one child. Families with lower incomes watch more television; those with an income of $20,000 to $29,999 watch an average of 49 hours per week, those with an income of $30,000 to $59,999 average 46 hours per week, and those with an income of more than $60,000 average 42 hours of TV viewing per week (Nielsen, 1998).

In addition to extensive viewing of programs and movies on television, children have access to other on-screen entertainment at home, such as video games and the Internet. The Annenberg study (Stanger and Gridina, 1999) found that own-

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ership of video game equipment in homes with children ages 2–17 has been increasing steadily in recent years. By 1999, 67 percent of the homes with children had video game equipment. That equipment may be an attachment to television, CD-ROM connection to a computer, or stand-alone game equipment. Slightly over 68 percent of homes with children have computers, and 41 percent have access to the Internet. The percent of homes with children that have computers that now have online access has nearly doubled since 1997. Since most new computers come with modems and Internet sign-up software, the ease of getting on the Internet has increased. A study for the Children Now organization (Children and the Media, 1999) reports that boys are more than twice as likely to play video games than girls (40 percent vs. 18 percent). Likewise, boys are more likely to use the Internet. Increasing use of the Internet throughout society clearly means that in the future this medium will be used by more and more children, and the contents of what children access will require scrutiny.

Today, however, television is the main source of entertainment and also the chief source of news and information for the majority of Americans. TV companies strive to hold viewers' attention to their particular network or channel because the numbers of viewers during any half hour (the "market share") has profit consequences. The larger the number of people watching that network or channel, the more that company can charge advertisers. The effort to increase viewers and gain market share apparently motivates the broadcasting of the sounds and sights of high-speed chases, beatings, stalkings, screaming attacks, and other violent action. Violence on the screen in series programs, specials, or movies seems to be a way of grabbing the attention of channel surfers, getting a higher Nielsen rating, and thus obtaining the higher "market share" that leads to greater advertising profits. As newsman Daniel Schorr observed, "Nothing works better on television than dramas of conflict and violence." Similarly, high action violence in video games seems to attract buyers. Overall, electronic media have a broad and deep reach into American households, and educators and parents must inquire into the influence that many hours of viewing has on young people. How much violence do they see during their viewing hours, and what do we know about the effects?

How Much Violence Is on the Screen?

Detailed evidence of the extent of violence in television programs and movies has been provided by two recent studies. The National Television Violence Study (1996) was conducted by researchers at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of North Carolina, the University of Texas, and the University of Wisconsin. All types of TV channels were monitored for a 12-month period. The study found that a majority (57 percent) of the programs contained violence, usually numerous acts of violence in a single program. They also found that in approximately 75 percent of violent programs, the violence seemed to be sanctioned; there was no punishment of the perpetrators. Violence was shown as humorous in more than a third of the programs, very few (4 percent) of the violent programs offered a strong antiviolence message. Among the five types of channels that were monitored, premium cable channels (such as Showtime, HBO, and Playboy) had the highest percentage of violent programs. Public broadcasting had the lowest percent of programs with violence. The networks were below the 57 percent average; basic cable channels were at the average; and independent stations were above average in violent programs. Of the various types of programs, movies had the greatest amount of violence and showed numerous violent acts realistically. Children's programs were found to have 10 percent more violence in their content than the average for adult programs.

The UCLA Center for Communications Policy (1997) conducted studies over a three-year period that monitored the violent content of specific programs on television and other home media. These studies have provided the specifics on where persistent acts of violence are seen. All of the prime-time series shows (such as *The Simpsons, Seinfeld, NYPD Blue*) were monitored, and considerable decreases in violence were found over the three years. Several shows were considered problematic, for instance, the persistently violent *Walker: Texas Ranger* and the persistently gruesome and frightening *The X-Files*. Television specials, sometimes termed "shockumentaries," had the worst record of increase of violence over the years. Along with terse, sometimes brutal-sounding narration, these shows have pulsing, tension-building music and show highly dramatized animal attacks, disasters, and accidents. Movies originally made for theaters were reported to

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have the greatest concentration of violence in 1995, but in the next two years the theater films shown on television channels had somewhat less violence. The research report, however, decried the number of violent scenes and the highly graphic violence shown in these movies and pointed out that they could be better edited for TV in consideration of younger viewers. Saturday morning children's adventure shows were categorized as "sinister combat violence," "slapstick violence," and "tame combat violence." Though the study found improvements over the three years, there are still "sinister combat" shows on Saturday morning that use hard-driving rock music as background and show mean-spirited, warrior-heros who are excessively violent. In some of the newer "slapstick" cartoons, researchers found increased fighting showing severe and malicious attacks with little attention paid to the consequences of such beating and destruction.

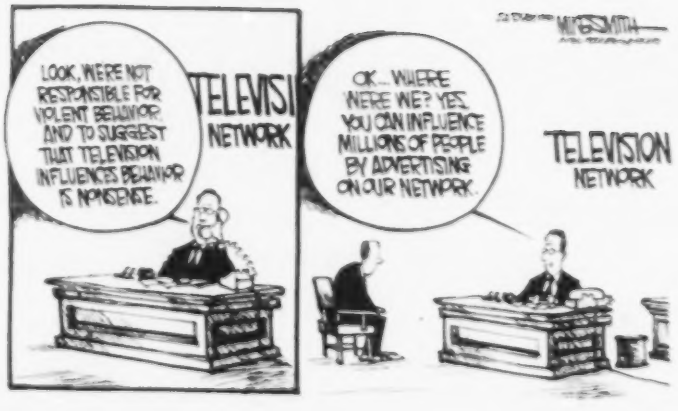
Video game play equipment is now available in two-thirds of homes with children. While video games appeal mainly to youngsters, they often depend on their parents to buy the games. Yet researchers have found that many of the top-selling games are violent (UCLA, 1997). Some critics contend that these games by their very design encourage violent action because the player is pulling a trigger or pressing a button to chase, attack, and destroy a figure on the screen. But the content of some of these games is more than a battle between good guys and bad guys; some are downright brutal and grisly. One best-seller is Mortal Kombat, a graphic game that has been available for several years. It is a game in which the player seeks to attack, slash, maim, and kill the cartoon adversary. More recent products have greater realism on the screen. Tekken 2, a marital arts game that looks quite lifelike, celebrates violence. The object of the game is to beat the opponent senseless to the sounds of groans and bones cracking, and then on screen the winner performs a brief victory dance. Duke Nukem 3D was the video game that raised the most concern in the last year of the UCLA study. Duke, the protagonist moved about by the player, has an arsenal that includes a pistol, shotgun, grenade, pipe bomb, and other weapons. He is supposedly saving the world from alien invaders and police pigs. As the study reports, when aliens or police pigs are shot, blood spatters on the screen and the victims scream in pain. Attacks using other weapons like the pipe bomb show blood spurting in every direction and flesh and eyeballs flying across the screen. Women are demeaned in the game; besides Duke, the only humans on the screen are female strippers and prostitutes who can be used for target practice with his weapons. Although this very violent game has a "parental lock," the researchers report that the default position is to have the lock off, and activating the lock would require a technically skilled parent. There is a rating system that was developed by the video game industry that indicates appropriate age levels, but the report noted that retailers sometimes place the price sticker over the rating and that some parents are unaware of or unaffected by the ratings.

Overall, these studies indicate that in recent years there has been some improvement in the screen entertainment that is likely to be viewed by young people at home, especially on the networks, but youngsters are still seeing and hearing a great deal of violent behavior during their usual late-afternoon, evening, and Saturday viewing times. Moreover, there is evidence that children may be watching programs during the later hours that are considered adult viewing time and seeing even more graphic shows that combine sex and violence.

Cumulative Effects of Viewing Violence

A newspaper report (Morehouse, 1995) reveals how certain dramatizations can glorify a violent lifestyle to young people and have horrific and sad effects. On a warm March evening, a 15-year-old youth from a small town south of Atlanta shot and killed both of his parents as they watched TV. His parents had been married 19 years, and the family was perceived by relatives and friends to be "a strong and loving family." Investigators learned that the young man and several of his friends had been excited by the movie video *Natural Born Killers*, had viewed it several times, and had outlined a plan to pattern their lives after its heroes. They wrote notes to each other referring to Mickey and Mallory, the couple in the movie who "killed 52 people in three weeks." The notes they exchanged revealed plans to "kill our parents, ... rob a pawn shop, and make our way across the country." "Let's kill 'til we are killed." All modeled after the movie.

Could one video have this effect? That's unlikely. Research suggests that the attraction to violent action is a cumulative effect of many hours and years of viewing violence on television and in movies—viewing by young people who have built up no critical resistance. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), the average youth, by age 18, will have viewed 200,000 acts of violence just on television. They observed that while a young viewer would


LOOK, WE'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR. AND TO SUGGEST THAT TELEVISION INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR IS NONSENSE.
TELEVISI
NETWORK
OK... WHERE WERE WE? YES, YOU CAN INFLUENCE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE BY ADVERTISING ON OUR NETWORK.
TELEVISION
NETWORK

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see three to five violent acts in an hour of prime-time viewing, the Saturday morning cartoons contain 20 to 25 violent acts per hour. Pediatricians warn that media violence can be especially damaging to children under age 8 because they cannot readily tell the difference between real life and fantasy. Piecing together research by psychologists, medical doctors, communications specialists, and social scientists, we can gain an insight into why public awareness of the serious effects of viewing violence has come about so slowly.

Unheralded Research in the 70s and 80s During the first decade of large-scale television viewing in the United States, a few psychologists advanced the idea that viewing violence in stories would have a cathartic effect on youngsters and possibly alleviate aggressive feelings that might be expressed in real-life relationships. But children are not naturally violent, and questions arose about why youthful violence was escalating. As the volume of research expanded, it refuted the old notion that vicarious violence is harmless.

Eron and Huesmann (1984; see also Huesmann and Eron, 1986) studied the effects of media violence on young children in the 1970s and found that the action on the TV screen was very real to children. Those who were heavy viewers of TV violence were more likely to act out violent scenes. These children tended to respond to what they were seeing as a model for their lives. Their TV viewing apparently served as a "script" for learning behavior. Following the youngsters over a period of years, longitudinal research showed that the children who viewed more violence and acted on it were more aggressive as teenagers and more prone to fighting and crime. They perceived aggressive or violent behavior as appropriate in certain life situations. Following their original subjects into adult life, Eron and Huesmann found that those who had the most arrests for drunk driving, violent crime, and abuse of their spouses were the heaviest viewers of TV and had been the most aggressive reactors when they were children.

In the 1980s Brandon Centerwall, a medical doctor, began years of research on violence for the Centers for Disease Control. Comparing data on people in areas with and without television and comparing crime statistics in areas before and after the introduction of TV, Centerwall (1993) concluded that homicide rates increased markedly when TV was introduced. Though Centerwall determined that viewing TV violence was not the only influence on the numbers of violent crimes in a region, his analysis showed that "there would be 10,000 fewer homicides, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults" if the negative effects of television could be removed.

Earlier research, supported by the major networks but generally poorly publicized and thus unheard of among the educators who have been working to reduce violence, also deserves our attention. Studies were initiated in the 1970s in reaction to public complaints and national hearings regarding children's exposure to aggression and violence on TV. The three major television networks at that time agreed to support research to address these concerns.

CBS commissioned a study of 1,565 teenage boys, 12–17, in London in the seventies (Belson, 1978). The research, which included extensive observations and interviews, revealed that boys who watched above-average hours of TV violence before adolescence committed a 49 percent higher rate of serious acts of violence than those who had viewed below-average quantities of violence. Although the study was conducted in London, many of the TV programs were imported from the United States, and the head of the research team made it clear that the findings were relevant to cities with similar violent television content. The research concluded that "high exposure to television violence increases the degree to which boys engage in serious violence." It is interesting that the heavy viewers of violence in the study seemed unaware of their own behavioral changes. Their negative attitudes toward violence appeared unchanged even though their behavior was changing. The continuous viewing of violence apparently gradually broke down inhibitions against being violent that are normally taught by parents and others adults. This research was published by a Westmead, England, publishing house and had very limited dissemination in the United States.

In the study commissioned by ABC, a Temple University research team conducted surveys of young male felons who had been imprisoned for violent crimes. They found that up to 34 percent of the felons, especially the most violent ones, said they had consciously imitated criminal acts that they learned from daily viewing of television programs on crime (Centerwall, 1993).

The poor dissemination of the outcomes of these studies reminds us of tobacco company studies on the ill effects of smoking. Why haven't we heard about this 20-year-old research? An article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* offers one perspective on why the findings of the network studies on TV violence are not well-known. Slaby (1994) explains that "until recently, researchers' voices have been drowned out in the din of denial and disinformation coming from executives of the television and movie industries, whose self-serving defense of violent programming has prevailed." He describes a wide gap between the research-documented conclusions of psychological and medical researchers and the sparse information that educators and the general public have about the effects of heavy viewing of violence in home entertainment.

Evidence Mounts in the 90s The American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth sought to get the word out to educators and the public in a 1993 report. A review of the research up to that time concluded that the evidence was very clear and that there was no doubt that the high levels of violence seen on television programs, day after day, were clearly correlated with increased acceptance of aggression and outright aggressive behavior. Moreover, it pointed out that the highest levels of consumption of television violence were by those young people who are most vulnerable to its effects because of little moderation by parents or/and school (American Psychological Association, 1993; Slaby,

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1994; Institute for Social Research, 1994; see also medical research by Holroyd, 1985; and Zuckerman and Zuckerman, 1985).

In 1995 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement that was a warning regarding the adverse effects of media violence on children. Research had shown the various effects that media violence has on children: increasing aggressiveness, decreasing sensitivity to violence and victims, increasing fear of becoming a victim, and increasing appetite for more violence in entertainment. Dr. Vic Strasburger, co-author of the policy statement, stated, "It's the cumulative effects, year after year. We are desensitizing even normal kids. We're making guns more glamorous, violence seem absolutely ordinary and everyday." The AAP policy statement made it clear that the vast majority of studies conclude that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between heavy viewing of media violence and real-life violence (AAP, 1995; Hendrick, 1995).

A comparative international study of television viewing by adolescents has documented that television plays a pivotal role in family behavior and relationships (Shanahan and Morgan, 1992). When television viewing behavior was compared across several nations, it was found that in homes in the United States, unlike those in the other countries studied, TV sets were on nearly continuously during waking hours. The researchers also found that American adolescents were much more likely to watch TV alone or with their friends, rather than with family members, as is more common in such countries as Argentina or China. Another interesting finding of this research was that children who watched television with their parents expressed greater closeness to their parents than those who did not. Other research on the family and media (Wright et al., 1994) indicates that children's assessment of the reality or unreality of what they see on television is affected by their parents' beliefs about the social realism of television.

A 1999 study that focused on the perceptions that children (12–17) have of the imagery of boys and men on television reported that 69 percent of the young people said that males shown on television could be described as "angry"; 72 percent said that the adjective "violent" described well the males on television. However, 58 percent of the young males in the study said the male figures on television are different from themselves and other males they know (Children Now, 1999). Apparently, some youngsters do distinguish reality from life on the screen, but how long can they resist being influenced by it?

In the National Television Violence Study (1996), in addition to monitoring the contents of all types of TV screen entertainment, the researchers analyzed hundreds of research studies of the effects of continuous viewing of violence and concluded that it can have serious long-term effects on behavior patterns. It can make some young people comfortable with violent content and arouse them to aggressive behavior, but it can make others increasingly fearful of being victims in what they perceive to be a completely mean and dangerous society. Their report called for schools to incorporate media studies or media literacy into classroom lessons that will involve students in reflecting on how TV presents life and thus affects life in the United States.

In summary, the negative influences of violence on the television screen are related to (a) frequent viewing of too much violence on the screen—in movies, TV programs, cartoons, and video games; (b) the lack of mediating influences by family members or peers; and (c) the need for critical study of the media in education.

Implications and Directions for Citizenship/Law-Related Education

What can we do in education to address and attempt to moderate the negative effects of all the violence that children of all ages see on television? Keeping informed about the research is an obvious first step. Studies of the effects of viewing violence on the electronic media come from several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, pediatrics, and mass communications. Until recently, those studies have been difficult to monitor. Most teachers have been unaware of the research that links violent behavior to cumulative viewing of violence. Textbooks and training programs used in the education of social studies teachers are just beginning to include studies of the mass media and the skills needed as a critical defense against the violence in the entertainment so pervasive in the lives of children. Pioneering curriculum and instruction can bring media awareness and media literacy into courses for both teachers and students.

LRE curriculum developers and teacher-educators have been focused on the broader issues of violence in society and have been involved in educational efforts to reduce violence. Likewise, LRE and citizenship education programs have been strong promoters of critical thinking. Consequently, lessons about media violence appear to be well-suited to teacher training and classroom activities in LRE. TV viewing and video games are topics in which young people already have a high interest. It should be an easily workable instructional step to move them into structured evaluation and critical thinking. Consider the following approaches:

1. **First Amendment Freedom of Speech.** One public response to television violence has been a demand for controls either by the TV companies themselves or by a public agency. A very readable book that examines the topic is *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television and the First Amendment* (Minow and Lamay, 1995). Educators can plan lessons that summarize the research and then evaluate the pros and cons of broadcast limitations during specific hours to protect what children are likely to see. How would it work out to impose national or regional censorship on television programs? Who would decide what shows, movies, or video games are "too violent"? Who would be the censors? What would be the criteria for keeping shows off the air? What precedents have been established in previous free speech cases? As an alternative, would networks respond to pub-

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lic pressure and review and censor their own programs in an effort to reduce violent programming? This is a public issue that is likely to generate interest because it has a great deal of personal connection to students' lives.

2. **Using the V-Chip.** Congress has passed legislation that requires technology in new television sets to allow parents to block the viewing of programs that they consider to be too violent. The V-chip in new TV sets will make it possible for parents to block programs either by rating or by individual selection. A rating system has been in effect for several years, and though two-thirds of parents have heard of it, only one-third are familiar with the "E/I" (educational) symbol rating programs for young people. In a national survey, a majority of 10- to 17-year-olds say that it would not influence the likelihood of watching a program if it is labeled as "educational" (Stanger and Gridina, 1999). Students can assess why there has been a groundswell of support for the V-chip in Congress and among parents and consider how it is an alternative to censorship. They can also discuss the feasibility of the V-chip requirement in television sets, including whether parents will have the time to learn to use rating information and whether parents will have the technical savvy to use the V-chip effectively. Here again, there is a personal connection to student life and a very clear context for classroom discussion.
3. **Critical Analysis.** Another approach to the study of violence on television is to review the research discussed here with students and use it as a starting point for their own group determination of the amount of violence on TV. Here is an issue demanding information, inquiries, comparisons, and critical discussion. (Several Web sites listed in the resources will be helpful. Also see Hepburn, 1995, 1997, 1999.) Students can be organized into teams to monitor and tabulate the acts of violence on current television programs received on local stations selected during viewing hours when young children and adolescents watch. Late afternoon, prime time, and Saturday morning programs, and shows or movies on somewhat later on Friday and Saturday evenings can be monitored for a week or two and the results used as the basis of further critical discussion. Likewise, a student committee can review the contents of the currently popular video games. Here are some questions to consider: How intense is the violence we see each day on the screen? Which hours have the most realistic, goriest, most frightening shows or movies? Are there overt or subtle actions that would influence young children? Adolescents? Is violent action on the screen having any influence on me, my friends, or my family? On society as a whole?
4. **Redesigning Programs to Present Fewer Sounds and Scenes of Violence.** Subsequent to the kinds of "deconstruction" activities suggested above, in which students critically analyze TV programs, movies, and video games and look for gratuitous, overly explicit violence, students can increase their awareness and advance their writing and creative skills by developing programs that are informational and entertaining without the violence. Middle school and secondary students can become quite engaged in deciding how they could retain the message or the humor but improve its presentation. Many enjoy rewriting, or even reenacting, improved sections of a program or movie showing how the violence overload in TV scenes, movies, and games can be avoided.
5. **Being Aware of Market Share.** An important part of media literacy is educating young consumers of home media. Teachers can readily obtain Nielsen ratings of TV shows from local libraries, television stations, or a summary from Nielsen Media Research. They can discuss the generalization that more action and more violence tend to attract more viewers when there are also programs that attract huge audiences without violence. Then they can discuss the potential power of consumers: If fewer people watch gratuitously violent programs and more people express their objections to them, will advertisers lose interest as the programs lose "market share"? And will they pay to advertise on better quality shows?
6. **Activities Involving the Family and Community.** Family and community should become co-partners in the effort to counter the violence in home media. Classroom and school activities will benefit from involving parents in reviews and discussions of the content of programs, the cumulative hours of viewing, and the influences on the aspirations and fears of their children. The Annenberg Public Policy Center's Fourth Annual Survey of Parents and Children (Stanger and Gridina, 1999—available on the Internet) contains many easy-to-read graphs and charts that can be used in the classroom, especially to examine the views of the 10- to 17-year-olds surveyed and interviewed. The study by Shanahan and Morgan (1992) can be used as the basis for discussing how parents can make a difference in how their children spend time viewing, how they select programs, and whether they talk with parents about the programs or games they view. Students can involve parents and other adults in hearing and talking about the research on the behavioral effects of what is seen on the screen. Perhaps a special parent-teacher-student evening could focus on the V-chip and the ways in which parents and schools can mediate to help reduce negative effects of violence on the screen. The data and possibilities regarding "market share" can also be discussed with parents and community leaders. Several Web sites in the resource list for this article will provide information related to current events that can be used for class and open-house discussion. For instance, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a statement after each of the murderous attacks by children in Littleton and Flint. Open discussions of these issues are becoming more prominent. CNN initiated discussion on the issue within a series of programs on the decline of

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civility in the United States. Questions were raised about a society in which many youngsters are so attuned to the color, sound, and movement of the TV media that they cannot pay attention long enough to learn to read. Educational organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies and the Constitutional Rights Foundation as well as the ABA have published background information and materials to help teachers deal with media violence in the classroom.

The current public climate regarding TV and movie entertainment appears to be sympathetic to critical media studies in schools and communities. The American public is concerned about the influence of television on young people. A national opinion poll of 1,209 adults conducted by *The New York Times* in July 1995 revealed that over half of the adults "could not think of a single good thing to say about television." They found that nearly 80 percent of Americans say they believe that the fictional world of violence and sex on the screen contributes to the ways in which young people behave in real life (Kolbert, 1995). Likewise, in the Annenberg study 84 percent of parents of youngsters 2–17 say they favor the V-chip and will use it when it is available.

Conclusion

Through awareness and critical thinking activities in the classroom, through family involvement and reflection, and through public interest and community involvement, we may be able to help young citizens, and ultimately all citizens, choose home electronic entertainment in a more informed and careful way. The need for awareness and caution in viewing and use extends not only to television programs, movies, and video games but is now needed as we select viewing locations on the Internet. Viewers/users/consumers can influence programming in the direction of improved quality, which has the potential of improving the quality of life. Dramatized, gratuitous violence on the screen is not the only factor contributing to violent youth behavior, but it is a powerful ingredient, and it may be one of the most remediable factors that educators and families can address.

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Resources for Teachers and Parents

American Academy of Pediatrics. See various reports and news releases about media violence and the effects on children on their Web site: www.aap.org

American Bar Association Division for Public Education. "Law in the New Information," *Update on Law-Related Education*, 22 (no. 2) 1998, contains viewpoints on free expression and regulation, updates on legislation and court decisions relating to the media, and several practical teaching strategies on media and communications issues. Available from the ABA Division for Public Education at www.abanet.org/publiced

American Medical Association. Print out several reports on media violence from their Web site at www.ama-assn.org including "Facts About Media Violence," "Media Violence: Tips for Parents," "Physician's Guide to Media Violence: Summary," and "Stop the Media Violence."

The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania publishes studies on media, information, and society. The fourth annual survey (1999) of parents and children entitled *Media in the Home* is available on their Web site at www.appcpenn.org

The Center for Media Literacy is a nonprofit organization that develops educational programs and materials to encourage critical thinking about all types of mass media. Online there is a catalog of educational kits, books, and videos for teachers and parents. One of their videos, *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*, has received praise for its approach to violence reduction. They also have a study kit "TV Alert: A Wake-Up Guide to Television Literacy." Their Web site is at www.medialit.org

Canadians Concerned About Violence in Entertainment (C-CAVE). This Canadian organization works jointly with U.S. organizations to disseminate media violence research and inform the public of the harmful influences of violent media. C-CAVE publishes a number of useful booklets. Contact them by e-mail: cfer@home.com

KIDSNET is an online national resource center on broadcasts for children from preschool to high school. The Web site serves as an information center and clearinghouse for children's television, videos, and multimedia. To increase media literacy they offer online study guides to link reading with viewing of quality TV programs. Find them at www.kidsnet.org

Media Awareness Network is sponsored by the Alliance for Children and Television, a non-profit Canadian organization that promotes the interests of children in regard to television, video, and other new media. Materials assist in the media education of children in school, family, and community. Their Web site is at www.media-awareness.ca/eng/

The Media Literacy Online Project. This is a project of the College of Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. On its Web site, it provides a wealth of background information, course syllabi, lesson plans, and other resources for teachers. It also provides information on media violence and other issues, resources for parents, lists of print materials, and directories of organization interested in media education. See www.interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/HomePage

The National Institute on Media and the Family provides online resources on research, information, and education on the impact of the media on children and families. Included is the "1999 Video and Computer Game Report" and numerous resources of value to teachers and parents for evaluating media and educating children. Contact the organization toll free at 888/672-5437 or see their Web site at www.mediaandthefamily.org

Nielsen Media Research Report on Television, 1998 (New report due out in 2000) can be purchased from Nielsen Media Research, 299 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10171. The report contains statistical data from Nielsen studies of regular TV and cable usage, viewing populations, hours of TV watching, top-ranked programs, and viewing trends. Also tracks increasing use of the Internet.

Catherine Gourley. *Media Wizards: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Media Manipulations*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 1999. Reveals how media wizards today use a variety of tricks to make their messages appealing—and misleading. Introduces middle school students to the techniques used in various types of programming and teaches media literacy skills.

Dave Grossman and Gloria Degaetano. *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1999. Chapters analyze the violent messages in television programs, movies, and video games; the rising violent crime rates of juveniles; and what parents and all citizens can do to lobby to stem the tide of violence in entertainment. Provides a detailed list of contacts and organizations that monitor the media and an extensive list of resources for instructional materials.

Henny H. Kim (editor). *Youth Violence*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998. This is a volume in the Current Controversies Series that contains selected readings on the problem of youth violence, causes including entertainment viewing, reducing the violence, and issues of punishment of juveniles.

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